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POL 23-9 GREECE
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

A-1901 NO.

CONFIDENTIAL HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State-WASHINGTON

INFO : ATHENS, LONDON

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUN 7 8 54 AM 1967

REVIEWED BY [illegible] STATE ANALYSIS BRANCH

FROM : American Embassy-PARIS DATE: June 5, 1967

SUBJECT : French-Greek Relations

REF : Paris 17102

[illegible] EXEMPTIONS

In a conversation May 29, the French Foreign Ministry's Chief of Southern Europe Affairs, M. Bressier, reviewed French policy toward the new Greek Government. He noted that privately the French Government deplores the coup and considers that it is easier to stage a coup than to return to constitutional processes. Publicly, the attitude of the French Government is reserved. As reported previously, the French Government considers that the government coup did not interrupt diplomatic relations between France and Greece. However, the French Ambassador in Athens has so far only called on the King, and he is under instructions not to call on any members of the government. If convoked by a Government Minister, he will have to refer the matter to Paris for a decision.

In line with its policy of public reserve, and in order to avoid becoming involved in public controversy, M. Bressier said the French Government has refrained from making any public statement on the Greek situation. The only minor exception to this rule was an official press briefing on what Foreign Minister Couve de Murville told the French Assembly's Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 19. Bressier confirmed as substantially correct the following account of Couve's statements as summarized in Le Monde of May 21-22, 1967 (informal translation):

"Speaking of the events in Greece, which have provoked an understandable emotion in France, the Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Clearances:

justified the position adopted by the French Government, which is anxious to maintain a humanitarian tradition and at the same time not to intervene in the internal affairs of a foreign country. He recalled that the maintenance of diplomatic relations does not imply any judgment on the government of a foreign state."

When asked about the French response to the circular note issued by the new Government after the coup, M. Bressier indicated that the French Embassy in Athens had acknowledged the note without consulting with, or receiving authorization from, Paris. He implied that the Foreign Ministry might not have agreed to this, but that once it was done they had let the matter drop.

During the discussion the reporting officer drew upon State 198166 in presenting the main elements of the U.S. position. In contrast to the American position, M. Bressier said that the French Government was taking a neutral stance and was not attempting to pressure or counsel the new Government.

Reaction in France. Following the excitement of the initial coup, press coverage of the Greek situation in France has been moderate but continuous. Editorials have been rare since the initial spate of sympathetic laments just after the coup.

Three French Deputies visited Greece in late April. Upon their return they stated at a press conference on May 3 that a popular uprising against the military Government was unlikely but they regretted the "remarkable discretion" of the French Embassy and launched an appeal for international solidarity to prevent the execution of political prisoners in Greece. As might be assumed from the tone of these remarks, the group consisted of one Communist Deputy (Fernand Dupuy), one Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left Deputy (Labaréré), and one Deputy affiliated to the Federation (Guy Desson). M. Bressier emphasized in the foregoing conversation that the three Deputies had made the trip on their own initiative and not as an official delegation of the National Assembly. He also mentioned that because the group had been well received by the Greek Government it had returned to Paris in a much less critical mood than might have been expected.

Since Paris telegram 17102 of April 26, Paris has been the scene of various demonstrations, meetings, and declarations hostile to the coup Government, but these have generally been on a small scale. The most recent was a "congress" sponsored by the

Association of Hellenic Students in Paris, which issued a press release stating: "Faced with the military junta installed and supported by the Palace, the Greek oligarchy, and the C.I.A., the Greep people cannot remain inactive. The Greek students abroad...have decided to fight with all their force against the military dictatorship." The result was an uneventful demonstration on May 29 by about 100 foreign and Parisian students in front of the Greek Embassy. (The allegation of C.I.A. involvement has also been carried by the French Communist Party organ, l'Humanité, but it has not been emphasized.)

When asked about the formation in France of militant groups that might try to take action against the Greek Government, M. Bressier of the French Foreign Ministry said that he had heard of none. He was certain that the Greek Embassy (which maintains good relations with the Quai) would have notified the French Government if any dangerous groups had been formed, but so far the Foreign Ministry has received no complaints from the Greek Embassy. Bressier was not even aware of the above-mentioned "congress", which received scant attention in the press.

BOHLEN